

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) An orthodontic bracket comprising:
 - a base to be attached to a tooth enamel surface;
 - a bracket main body formed on the base and including an archwire slot with an opening that is opened in a direction opposite to the base;
 - a guiding part formed in at least one of the bracket main body and the base, said guiding part crossing the archwire slot;
 - a cover portion ~~supported by~~disposed on the bracket main body and having a covering claw;
 - a band-shaped clip guided by the guiding part and curved in substantially U-shape in its cross section when the clip is attached to the bracket main body, the clip having a holding part that covers at least a portion of the opening of the archwire slot, and also the clip having a locking portion that is formed at one end of the clip in its longitudinal direction, said locking portion having a locking claw,
 - wherein the locking claw and the covering claw are brought in engagement with each other at a mutual locking position.

2. (previously presented) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1, wherein the holding part of the clip is adapted to press the archwire toward the bottom side of the archwire slot.

3. (previously presented) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1, wherein the locking claw and the covering claw are positioned to be engageable with each other when said archwire slot receives therein an archwire having a cross-sectional size less than a predetermined size.

4. (previously presented) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1, wherein the locking claw and the covering claw are slidably brought in contact with each other when the clip is assembled with the bracket main body, thereby enabling continuance of a condition where the locking claw and the covering claw engage each other.

5. (currently amended) An orthodontic bracket comprising:
a base to be attached to a tooth enamel surface;
a bracket main body formed on the base and including an archwire slot with an
opening that is opened in a direction opposite to the base;
a guiding part formed in at least one of the bracket main body and the base, said
guiding part crossing the archwire slot;
a cover portion supported by the bracket main body and having a covering claw;

a band-shaped clip guided by the guiding part and curved in substantially U-shape in its cross section when the clip is attached to the bracket main body, the clip having a holding part that covers at least a portion of the opening of the archwire slot, and also the clip having a locking portion that is formed at one end of the clip in its longitudinal direction, said locking portion having a locking claw,

wherein the locking claw and the covering claw are brought in engagement with each other at a mutual locking position, and~~The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1,~~
wherein the covering claw is deformable by a determined angle around a fulcrum of the cover portion in such a manner that the covering claw is slidably engaged and locked into place by the locking claw.

6. (currently amended) An orthodontic bracket comprising:

a base to be attached to a tooth enamel surface;
a bracket main body formed on the base and including an archwire slot with an opening that is opened in a direction opposite to the base;
a guiding part formed in at least one of the bracket main body and the base, said guiding part crossing the archwire slot;
a cover portion supported by the bracket main body and having a covering claw;
a band-shaped clip guided by the guiding part and curved in substantially U-shape in its cross section when the clip is attached to the bracket main body, the clip having a holding part that covers at least a portion of the opening of the archwire slot, and also the clip having a

locking portion that is formed at one end of the clip in its longitudinal direction, said locking
portion having a locking claw,

wherein the locking claw and the covering claw are brought in engagement with
each other at a mutual locking position, and~~The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1,~~
wherein the cover portion is integrally formed with the main body, and the clip has a restriction
part that is formed at the other end of the clip in its longitudinal direction and positions the clip
relative to the main body.

7. (currently amended) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim ~~1~~16, wherein the
cover portion is integrally formed with the clip.

8. (currently amended) An orthodontic bracket comprising:
a base to be attached to a tooth enamel surface;
a bracket main body formed on the base and including an archwire slot with an
opening that is opened in a direction opposite to the base;
a guiding part formed in at least one of the bracket main body and the base, said
guiding part crossing the archwire slot;
a cover portion supported by the bracket main body and having a covering claw;
a band-shaped clip guided by the guiding part and curved in substantially U-shape
in its cross section when the clip is attached to the bracket main body, the clip having a holding
part that covers at least a portion of the opening of the archwire slot, and also the clip having a

locking portion that is formed at one end of the clip in its longitudinal direction, said locking portion having a locking claw,

wherein the locking claw and the covering claw are brought in engagement with each other at a mutual locking position, and~~The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1,~~
wherein the covering claw is deformable by a determined angle around a fulcrum of the cover portion for releasing the engagement between the covering claw and the locking claw.

9. (original) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 8, wherein the cover portion comprises:

a lever for receiving external force so as to deform the covering claw.

10. (original) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 9, wherein the lever comprises a concave portion that is adapted to receive a predetermined engagement releasing instrument.

11. (original) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1, wherein at least one of the locking claw and the covering claw has a tapered step portion.

12. (previously presented) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1, wherein the holding part of the clip has a large width part as compared with a remaining part.

13. (currently amended) An orthodontic bracket comprising:

a base to be attached to a tooth enamel surface;
a bracket main body formed on the base and including an archwire slot with an
opening that is opened in a direction opposite to the base;
a guiding part formed in at least one of the bracket main body and the base, said
guiding part crossing the archwire slot;
a cover portion supported by the bracket main body and having a covering claw;
a band-shaped clip guided by the guiding part and curved in substantially U-shape
in its cross section when the clip is attached to the bracket main body, the clip having a holding
part that covers at least a portion of the opening of the archwire slot, and also the clip having a
locking portion that is formed at one end of the clip in its longitudinal direction, said locking
portion having a locking claw,
wherein the locking claw and the covering claw are brought in engagement with
each other at a mutual locking position, and~~The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1,~~
wherein the clip has a drawing hole that is adapted to receive a releasing instrument for releasing
an engagement between the covering claw and the locking claw.

14. (previously presented) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1, wherein the holding part of the clip has an arc-shaped cross sectional shape along its width direction, thereby being adapted to press down the archwire towards the bottom of the archwire slot while the clip is being elastically deformed so that the cross sectional shape is flattened.

15. (original) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 1, wherein the locking claw and the covering claw are brought in engagement with each other at a mutual locking position, when said archwire slot receives therein an archwire having a cross-sectional size more than a predetermined size.

16. (currently amended) An orthodontic bracket comprising:
a base to be attached to a tooth enamel surface;
a bracket main body formed on the base and including an archwire slot with an opening that is opened in a direction opposite to the base and is located in a first face, the first face being on a side of the bracket main body substantially opposite the base;

a guiding part formed in at least one of the bracket main body and the base, said guiding part having an orientation substantially perpendicular to the archwire slot;

a cover portion supported by the bracket main body, disposed ~~adjacent to said opening~~ substantially parallel to the first face, and including a means for engaging another member;

a clip guided by the guiding part, the clip having a holding part that covers at least a portion of the opening of the archwire slot, and also the clip having a locking portion that is formed at one end of the clip in its longitudinal direction, said locking portion having a means for locking with said means for engaging,

wherein the means for locking of the clip and the means for engaging of the cover portion are brought in engagement with each other at a mutual locking position and thereby attach the clip to the bracket main body.

17. (new) An orthodontic bracket comprising:

- a base to be attached to a tooth enamel surface;
- a bracket main body formed on the base and including an archwire slot with an opening that is opened in a direction opposite to the base;
- a guiding part formed in at least one of the bracket main body and the base, said guiding part crossing the archwire slot;
- a cover portion supported by the bracket main body;
- a band-shaped clip guided by the guiding part and having a substantially ring-shaped cross section when the clip is attached to the bracket main body, the clip having a holding part that covers at least a portion of the opening of the archwire slot, and also the clip having first and second locking portions formed at longitudinally opposing ends of the clip, said locking portions having first and second locking claws adapted to mutually engage one another to form the substantially ring-shaped cross-section of the clip,

wherein the cover portion is disposed so as to bias the first and second locking claws into engagement with one another.

18. (new) The orthodontic bracket as set forth in claim 17, wherein the cover portion is integrally formed with the clip.